

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY:M/CT:LDHECK/NEA:MDRAPER
APPROVED BY:P:PHABIB
M:CEMCMANAWAY
S/S-O:AWOTTO
NEA:RATHERTON
DESIRED DISTB:M, NEA, P, M/CT, SY ONLY

----- 086172
O 240343Z SEP 76 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, LE, CY

SUBJECT: TERRORISM: LEBANESE GROUP DEMANDS FOR HOSTAGE
RELEASE

REF: A) NICOSIA 2946 B) BEIRUT 7643

1. UNTIL WE HAVE FULLY SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE TO CONTRARY,
WE FEEL WE ARE COMPELLED TO PROCEED ON ASSUMPTION THAT
LETTER FROM SO CALLED R.H.A.I.L. LEBANESE GROUP IS AUTHEN-
TIC AND ITS DEMANDS SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. UNDER
NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES UPON RECEIPT OF SUCH DEMANDS WE
WOULD IMMEDIATELY TURN TO HOST GOVERNMENT AND REMIND IT OF
ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROTECTION OF ALL PERSONS, INCLUD-
ING U.S. CITIZENS WITHIN ITS TERRITORY. GIVEN SITUATION
IN LEBANON AND LACK OF ADEQUATE IDENTIFICATION OF THIS

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GROUP OR ITS LOCATION WE BELIEVE IT PRUDENT TO CONTACT

THE SEVERAL EXISTING AUTHORITIES WHO MAY BE ABLE TO ASSIST
IN THIS MATTER.

2. OUR APPROACH TO EACH GROUP (CHRISTIAN, PLO AND
LAA) WILL VARY AND REQUIRE A DIFFERENT RATIONAL.
SINCE INITIAL CONTACT ACCORDING TO EXTORTION LETTER IS IN
CHRISTIAN CONTROLLED LEBANON, IT WILL BE BEST TO MAKE

DETAILED APPROACH TO CHRISTIANS. WE WOULD PLAN TO BRING
THEM INTO PICTURE BY PROVIDING THEM WITH TEXT OF EX-
TORTION LETTER AND INQUIRING HOW THEY PROPOSE TO DEAL
WITH MATTER.

3. ACCORDINGLY YOU ARE AUTHORIZED TO GET IN TOUCH BY
TELEPHONE WITH SARKIS OR ANY OTHER APPROPRIATE CHRISTIAN
AUTHORITY TO CONVEY BASIC MESSAGE SET FORTH BELOW, PLUS
TEXT OF EXTORTION LETTER. WE RECOGNIZE THAT SUCH TALKS
WILL BE MONITORED BY FATAH BUT BELIEVE THIS A REASONABLE
RISK TO TAKE SINCE, IN ANY EVENT THE PLO
IS TO BE CONTACTED (SEE BELOW). IF TELEPHONE CONTACT
CANNOT BE MADE, THEN YOU SHOULD ARRANGE TO DELIVER --
POSSIBLY THROUGH KHAWAND -- A WRITTEN MESSAGE TO SAME
PEOPLE. BASIC MESSAGES YOU SHOULD CONVEY TO SARKIS OR
OTHER APPROPRIATE CHRISTIAN AUTHORITY IS ALONG FOLLOWING
LINES -

A) WE HAVE NOT REACHED FINAL JUDGEMENT ON AUTHENTICITY
OF TERRORIST DEMANDS BUT WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO
PROCEED ON ASSUMPTION THAT DEMANDS ARE SERIOUS AND
SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. WE ARE TREATING THE MATTER WITH
UTMOST DISCRETION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT YOU WOULD DO
LIKEWISE. WE WOULD WELCOME ON URGENT BASIS ANY COMMENTS
WHICH YOU HAVE ABOUT LETTER AND ITS AUTHENTICITY.
SPECIFICALLY, CAN YOU SHED ANY LIGHT ON VALIDITY OF
LEBANESE GROUP'S CLAIM THAT IT IS HOLDING FORTY-SEVEN
HOSTAGES, OF WHICH 29 ARE SAID TO BE U.S. CITIZENS AND 18
FROM VARIOUS WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES?

B) ASSUMING LETTER IS NOT A HOAX, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT
IT IS CONTRARY TO USG POLICY TO PAY RANSOM OR OTHERWISE
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YIELD TO THIS KIND OF BLACKMAIL. WE HAVE NO INTENTION
OF DOING SO IN THIS CASE.

C) AT SAME TIME, WE ARE NATURALLY CONCERNED ABOUT WELFARE
OF ALLEGEDLY KIDNAPPED AMERICAN CITIZENS AND WE WOULD
WELCOME ANYTHING YOU COULD DO TO SECURE THEIR SAFETY.

D) WE DO NOT WISH TO COUNSEL YOU ON HOW TO RESPOND TO

DEMANDS FROM ABDUCTORS. IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH THE KIDNAPPER GROUP TO CONSIDER ITS DEMANDS WE WILL ASSUME A NEUTRAL POSITION TOWARD YOUR DECISION IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR RIGHT AND OBLIGATION TO PROTECT FOREIGNERS BY ANY MEANS YOU CONSIDER BEST.

E) AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF OUR POLICY IN SUCH

SITUATIONS AND OUR VIEW OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY, WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHAT STEPS YOU ARE PREPARED TO TAKE TO ENTER INTO CONTACT WITH THE KIDNAPPERS FOR THE PURPOSES OF ASCERTAINING THE WELL-BEING OF THE HOSTAGES AND OF SECURING THEIR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE.

4. LAA - YOU SHOULD ALSO RAISE YOUR G-2 CONTACT TOMORROW SEPT. 24 AND PASS TEXT OF EXTORTION LETTER. TELL HIM THAT WE HAVE NOT REACHED FINAL JUDGMENT ON AUTHENTICITY OF TERRORIST DEMANDS BUT WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO PROCEED ON ASSUMPTION THAT DEMANDS ARE SERIOUS AND SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. WE ARE TREATING THE MATTER WITH UPMOST DISCRETION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT G-2 WOULD DO LIKEWISE. INFORM HIM THAT WE ARE APPROACHING CHRISTIAN AUTHORITIES BUT RECOGNIZING THAT 47 HOSTAGES MAY BE HELD IN TERRITORY IN WHICH LAA HAS INFLUENCE, ASK WHAT THEY INTEND TO DO AND SOLICIT SUGGESTION OR INFORMATION FROM THEIR ASSETS.

5. PLO - CONCURRENTLY RSO O'BRIEN SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH HIS PLO CONTACT AND PROVIDE HIM WITH COPY OF EXTORTION LETTER. EXPLAIN TO HIM THAT WE CANNOT IGNORE FACT THAT DEMANDS MAY BE SERIOUS AND THAT WE ARE APPROACHING CHRISTIANS SINCE ACCORDING TO EXTORTION LETTER
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CONTACT IS TO BE MADE IN THAT PART OF LEBANON. SINCE 47 HOSTAGES MAY BE IN WEST BEIRUT OR SOUTH LEBANON WE ARE APPROACHING ALL THREE PARTIES TO DETERMINE IF THEY HAVE SUGGESTION OR INFORMATION FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE ASSETS. POINT OUT THAT WE ARE TREATING THIS MATTER WITH UPMOST DISCRETION AND WE WOULD HOPE THAT THEY WOULD DO LIKEWISE.

6. FYI OUR POLICY IN DEALING WITH ABDUCTIONS AND ACTS OF TERRORISM AGAINST US CITIZENS IS SET FORTH IN STATE 283548 WHICH WE ARE REPEATING TO YOU. END FYI.
ROBINSON

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NNN

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